

Pollution in Maryland Valley

The article "Pollution: Chemical company's effort to sue its accuser fails" by Thomas H. Maugh II (News and Comment, 13 Jan., p. 157) reads as though the writer was not present at the trial and did not read the transcripts. The jury's duty was not to decide a scientific question, namely, what had caused the increased incidence of cancer in Little Elk Valley, Maryland. Their duty was to decide if I had acted responsibly or irresponsibly in publicizing my observations.

The Galaxy Chemical Company's solvent recycling plant operation in the Little Elk Valley in 1961. Since 1969, there has been an increase in the occurrence of lymphomas: seven within about 1 kilometer from the plant and two more within 3 or 4 kilometers. Increase of other malignancies has also been reported.

In my unpublished paper, I did not make conclusions about the cause or causes of this increase, but I cannot subscribe to the theory of the witness hired by the prosecution, William P. Radford, who attributes the high lymphoma rate to the old paper mill that previously operated on the site of the Galaxy plant. I have been unable to find lymphomas in other former paper-mill workers in the area, except for the valley group. Further, although the paper mill was in operation from the 1880's until 1948, the area did not experience an increased death rate due to lymphomas from 1963 to 1968, according to records of the Maryland State Health Department and from 1940 to 1960, according to my own inquiries. With regard to the incubation period required for the development of lymphomas, their occurrence has been reported in individuals from 1 year to about 25 years after those individuals began receiving therapy with diphenylhydantoin (1). Consequently other possibilities discussed at the trial by defense witnesses B. Friedlander and Samuel S. Epstein are more logical to me.

My principal objective has been to stimulate governmental health agencies to take a more active role in protecting the public from the effects of industrial pollution. At least in part, the Galaxy affair and its resulting publicity has promoted this objective, as illustrated by the establishment of a Tumor Registry in Maryland.

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References

1. M. P. Fried and Y. Sunwoo, *Laryngoscope* **85**, 1770 (1975); F. P. Li, D. R. Willard, R. Goodman, G. Vawter, *Cancer* **36**, 1359 (1975).

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